the variety of the claims on the success ot the nuclear tests conducted recently at Pokhran; and

(b) if so, what is his reaction thereto and whether the joint Committee, would also include some nuclear scientists of repute so as to assist the Committee in its deliberations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) The matter has been checked and Shri H.D. Deve Gowda's office has indicated that no such statement was made by him.

(b) Does not arise.

पासपोर्ट कार्यालयों का आधुनिकीकरण

1716. श्री चीमनभाई हरिभाई शुक्लाः क्या प्रधान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे किः

(क) क्या आठवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना के द्वारा देश के सभी पारपत्र कार्यालयों के आधुनिकीकरण और विस्तार की कोई योजना थी;

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ग) क्या इस संबंध में कोई व्यापक प्रारूप योजना तैयार की गई थी;

(घ) क्या सरकार का बड़े और मझौले राज्यों में पारपत्र कार्यालय खोलने का कोई विचार है; और

(ड) यदि हां, तो इस संबंध में गुजरात सहित अन्य राज्यों का ब्यौरा क्या है?

विदेश मंत्रालय में राज्यमंत्री (श्रीमती वसुन्धरा राजे): (क) से (ग़) आठवां पंचवर्षीय योजना के दौरान सभी पासपोर्ट कार्यालयों के आधुनिकीकरण तथा विस्तार करने की किसी विस्तृत योजना का प्रारूप तैयार नहीं किया गया था। तथापि, इस प्रकार का आधुनिकीकरण तथा विस्तार एक सतत् प्रक्रिया है। इस दिशा में कुछ नए कदम उठाए गए हैः पासपोर्ट कार्यालयों तथा संग्रहण केन्द्रों की संख्या बढ़ाना, पासपोर्ट कार्यालयों का कम्प्यूटरीकरण, कम्प्यूटरीकृत प्रणाली संस्थापित करना, कार्यालय उपकरण सुविधाओं का उन्नयन, कर्मचारियों की संख्या में वृद्वि करना आदि। सरकार के पास उपग्रह आधारित कम्प्यूटर संचार नेटवर्क के जरिए सभी पासपोर्ट कार्यालयों को एक केन्द्रीय प्रसंस्करण एकक के साथ जोड़ने का प्रस्ताव विचाराधीन है।

(घ) और (ड) इस समय देश भर में 27 पासपोर्ट कार्यालय तथा 10 संग्रहण केन्द्र कार्यरत है। पूणे में पासपोर्ट कार्यालय शीघ्र ही खोला जाना है। सरकार के पास किसी अन्य राज्य में कोई अतिरिक्त पासपोर्ट कार्यालय खोलने का कोई प्रस्ताव इस समय विचाराधीन नहीं है. तथापि सरकार ने ईटानगर (अरूणाचल प्रदेश), औरंगाबाद (महाराष्ट्र), तिरुपति और विजयवाड़ा (आंध्र प्रदेश), इलाहाबाद और आगार (उत्तर प्रदेश), गुड़ागांव (हरियाणा), सूरत (गूजरात) और गुलबर्गा (कर्नाटक) में सग्रहण केन्द्र खोलने का निर्णेय लिया हैबशर्ते कि संबंधित राज्य सरकारें कार्यालय के लिए उपयुक्त स्थान उपलब्ध करा सकें।

India's Security Concern

1717. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Assistant Secretary of State Ride Inderfurth during his recent visit in the aftermath of the Ghauri missile test by Pakistan, has appreciated India's growing security concerns in South-Asia especially in the context of nuclear missile proliferation in the region; and

(b) if so, whether in this context Government have reviewed its nuclear opinions and nuclear policy in general, if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Rick Inderfurth, US Assistant Secretary of State who was in India as a member of the delegation led by Ambassador Bill Richardson, Permanent Representative of the USA to the United Nations, drew attention to the US statement which regretted Pakistan's decision to conduct the missile test. The US delegation, however, urged India to exercise restraint in this context.

(b) Government keeps the country's nuclear policy under constant review. Following the recent nuclear tests at Pokhran on May 11 and 13, 1998,

Government are in the process of reviewing the nuclear policy of the country. Government has also announced that India will observe a voluntary moratorium and refrain from conducting underground nuclear test explosions.

Ratification of CTBT

1718. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item published in the Hindustan Times, dated 18th May, 1998 captioned "CTBT office hopes Indian Tests would prompt more ratifications" soon and give it universal acceptance;

(b) whether the Indian Ambassador to the U.N. met recently CTBT officials in Vienna and explained reasons for conducting the nuclear tests and also out lined India's conditions for acceptance by CTBT; and

(c) if so. Government's latest stand regarding ratification of CTBT keeping in view Article 15 of the treaty which clearly states that no country can sign it with reservations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir. Our Ambassador to Austria, who is also India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Offices based in Vienna, met Wolfgang Hoffman, Director General of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) and handed over Government's press statements, issued after the nuclear tests at Pokhran.

(c) Government have declared that we would be willing to consider adhering to some of the undertakings of the CTBT Government have also stated that these decisions cannot be taken in a vacuum but would depend upon reciprocal responses.

Illegal migration of Indian Workers

1719. PROF. RAM KAPSE:
SHRIMATI MALTI SHARMA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Malta Boat tragedy of the Greek Coast last year, which claimed over 225 Indian lives has failed to deter the" continued migration of Indian workers by illegal means;

(b) if so, what is the number of these migrants and also of those apprehended in the process since the Malta-tragedy; and

(c) the steps taken to effectively prevent such migration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) 25 persons have so far been charged for their involvement in the Malta boat tragedy. Investigation is continuing. Government continues to receive reports of the presence abroad of Indian immigrants whose residence status is not legal.

(b) As per information available, about 8600 Indian nationals have been found, since the Malta boat tragedy in December, 1996, to be allegedly staying illegally in various countries abroad, almost all of whom have been apprehended.

(c) The following procedural safeguards have been put in place to check such migration;

(i) It is obligatory for all unskilled, semi-skilled and certain categories of skilled workers to get emigration clearance from the Ministry of Labour before proceeding abroad for employment.

(ii) It is a cognizable offence for anyone to advertise in a. newspaper, soliciting applications for employment abroad, without quoting the Ministry of Labour's licence number.